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Published Daily at 200 S. Miami Avenue, Miami 30, Florida

6-A

Thursday, March 8, 1962

That Last Word Was Russia's

Case Of The Un-Secret 'Spy'

THE CASE of Francis Gary Powers illustrates the effectiveness of Communist propaganda. It should help immunize Americans against this insidious weapon.

When Powers' U2 plane crashed in the heart of Russia May 1, 1960, the Reds screamed, "Spy!" Many Americans swallowed the word hook, line and sinker. Some are still saying Powers was a "spy."

Yet espionage by definition is secret — "systematic secret observation of the words and conduct of others." An example is the performance of Col. Rudolph Abel, the Soviet master spy in the United States who was exchanged for Powers. Abel disguised his identity, posed as a photographer and smuggled reports to his superiors through such devices as microfilm coiled inside a plugged nickel.

By contrast, Powers and his fellow U2 pilots had been crisscrossing the Soviet Union for four years. Nikita Khrushchev knew of them and admitted it in the long harangue he made after using the Powers incident as an excuse for breaking up the Paris summit conference and insulting President Eisenhower. What infuriated the Russians was that they couldn't reach the high-flying U2's, at least until Powers came along, if it is true that a Soviet rocket brought him down.

The U2's carried on reconnaissance or surveillance, not spying. Their work was as secret as the presence of Western military attaches at embassies in Moscow

who report their observations of Soviet military developments.

In the Powers case, the Reds also made much of the explosive charge attached to his plane and a poison needle which he carried.

The Central Intelligence Agency, Powers' employer, has now made clear that he had no orders to commit suicide and wasn't expected to. On the contrary, his instructions were to cooperate with his captors if escape appeared impossible, and tell the truth about everything except certain details of the U2.

A third major point in Communist propaganda about Powers was his salary of \$30,000 a year. This, according to Moscow, made him a "mercenary," the standard Communist smear for anyone working against Red interests.

Earnings of \$30,000 a year are not uncommon among airline pilots whose work is less hazardous than was Powers'.

Even at the peak of the propaganda barrage, many Americans persisted in withholding judgment on Powers. Their sense of fair play demanded his side of the story, which has come out nearly two years after the event. The CIA, after exhaustive investigation, has cleared him of any shortcomings.

With all the facts in hand, individuals are now in a position to arrive at an informed opinion about Powers' performance. Whether the verdict is favorable or unfavorable, the Powers case stands as a warning against the infectious character of Communist propaganda.